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ABSTRACT

An intensive case study was conducted of one high school student's internship in an effort to determine the organizing principles that created the internship curriculum. A junior in the School for Extended Learning received high school credit for serving an internship at the Community Video Center (CVC), a non profit organization offering video instruction and services to the community. Data was gathered through observation of the student's activities and interviews with the school and site supervisors. The formal curricular document for the experience was a Learning Experience Activity Package, drawn up prior to the internship, by the school supervisor after interviewing CVC staff. It was observed, however, that the student's activities were governed not by the package but by the organization's needs and by what the intern was deemed able to do with minimal risk to the functioning of CVC. The student was usually given tasks that required minimal supervision, assistance, or responsibility. Factors that shaped internship action were mainly internal to the functioning of CVC and the formal curriculum package was rarely used. In analyzing the experience, it was noted that, while the ongoing needs of the workplace were paramount in forming the curriculum the student actually followed, ample learning opportunities were available to the student. (JD)

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How It Happened:

An Analysis of Curriculum in an Internship Site

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In formal educative settings, the curriculum divides the codified, school-bound knowledge of a culture into sections that are organized according to certain principles. Educators believe that sound educational philosophy based on knowledge of human development (Tyler, 1949) and the logic of the discipline and its internal organization (Phenix, 1964) lies at the base of these organizing principles. The principles operate through the entire spectrum of curriculum organization - from the divisions among disciplines through courses at various grade levels to units and lessons within a given course. In internships, there are organizing principles of curriculum at work also, similar in some ways and different in others from the traditional principles. The organizing principles that create the curriculum in an internship are the subject of this paper.

An intensive case study was conducted in an internship of an alternative high school. The observations and interviews were designed to provide information about the naturally occurring curriculum at the site. From the analysis of the data, I proposed a reconceptualization of curriculum that would be appropriate to the unique conditions of internships, that both reflected the natural forces at work in the creation of the intern's experience and might aid the sponsoring institution in structuring that experience. In reference to the internship, curriculum was redefined in broad terms to include

the plans for, actions in and outcomes of all the intern's experiences (Tipper, 1982).

In this paper, the natural forces that were observed to influence the internship action are analyzed in terms of two categories: principles and factors. Principles are rules of action; they are constant conditions governing what goes on. Factors are elements that contribute to the total internship situation; they are occasional parts of the whole picture.

Research Design

The internship site which was studied for this research was part of an alternative school program in a large city. The School for External Learning (SEL) places its students in community sponsored "resources" for which they are granted academic credit. The school supervises the experiences with Resource Coordinators (RC) who establish, monitor, and evaluate the resources, and with Student Advisors (SA) who counsel the students about personal and resource problems. The person who supervises the intern at the resource site is called the Resource Person (RP). This research was primarily concerned with the process of creating and adapting curriculum that was negotiated between the community Resource Person (RP), the Resource Coordinator (RC), and the SEL student.

Site Selection

I attended meetings between prospective RP's and an RC

from SEL. From five of these possible new resources, a site was chosen for the case study based on the following criteria: no existing training program, cooperation of all actors, hours and days of student participation during which I could be present, and a nineteen week term. The Community Video Center (CVC), a non-profit organization which offers video instruction and services to the community, was selected.

Data Collection →

Prior to the student's participation, I collected the following data: observations from the first meeting between the RP and the RC; formal interviews with the student, the RP, and the RC; observations from the initial interview between the student and the RP; and documents like the Learning Experience Activity Package (LEAP), which is the formal curricular document for the resource, the student journal, visit reports, and catalogue entries.

Throughout the student's internship, I was present as a participant observer (with more of a tendency toward observation than participation) for at least one visit of approximately two hours per week and occasionally for two visits per week. Contact with the RC was maintained through weekly phone calls and visits to SEL. All observations were recorded immediately after the visits, informal interviews, or telephone calls in the form of traditional anthropological field notes (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Formal interviews were tape recorded and transcribed later.

After nineteen weeks of participation at CVC, the student concluded her internship. At that time, I conducted formal interviews with the student, the RP, and the RC. All products of the student's actions were reviewed, as were the student's journal and the evaluation documents completed by both the student and the RP.

Community Video Center

The following description of the Community Video Center (CVC) will serve as background for the analysis of curriculum to follow. The names of all people and places have been changed.

Mission

Community Video Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to the support and advancement of video, particularly documentary work. There are two components of the Center's mission: video production and community service through video. The documentaries that have been made by the Center's staff are often radical in their politics and in their video style. Therefore, the mission of the Center extends beyond the promotion of video to the promotion of certain political and social ideologies through the medium of video tapes.

Personnel

The Center has two directors, Allen and Tai; they are the original founders of CVC. When Beverly, the student, first

came to the Center, there were five full-time staff. Rita, Beverly's official supervisor (RP), was the office manager. Two and a half months into Beverly's internship, CVC hired Chris to be the full-time office manager; that is his only job. Each of the other staff people takes one day of office work during the week and spends the other four days working on individual video projects.

Space

CVC is housed in an old firehouse. The spacious environment allows people to spread out with their projects into different sections of the building and to work relatively undisturbed. Beverly spent most of her time in the office.

Atmosphere

The first time I visited CVC, Rita wore cut-off denims; Tai's daughter played on the floor, her toys spread all over; a radio was tuned to a rock station. This first scene was typical, but despite the low-key atmosphere, CVC is nonetheless professional in feel. The staff all take their work very seriously and expect high quality performance from themselves and each other. The place is very busy, not chaotic, but constantly buzzing with a variety of activities.

The Student

Beverly was new to SEL. She entered as a junior after nearly flunking out of a Catholic girls' school because she

frequently "cut" her classes. Her goal for her internship at CVC was to "go all the time and not mess up." This was Beverly's last chance to make it in high school.

Beverly worked three days a week at a clothing store; CVC was her only internship. Throughout the four months of her internship, Beverly had the conflicts not only of her other work, but also of her ill health. She had coughs, colds, and a pulled muscle in her leg.

The Experience

Beverly began her internship on September 22, 1980, and ended on January 15, 1981. During that period, she attended CVC from 10:00 to 5:00 on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Exceptions occurred when she called in sick (approximately 5 times), left early (approximately 10 times), went out of town (two weeks), or negotiated new hours (two weekends during the video festival). Most of the time, Beverly was present on the designated days for the proper amount of time.

At the beginning of her internship, Beverly was kept busy with office work even though she had stressed her interest in learning to make video tapes. However, she claimed not to mind the office work she was doing and said she would have to learn how to use the equipment before she could get into the video work. In addition to her office work, she also took CVC's introductory video classes. Within the first month, Beverly began to express some dissatisfaction with the amount of office

work she was doing in comparison to video work, and she considered dropping the internship after the first eight week term. She complained to her advisor, and within a very short time, Rita had assigned her to do a "shoot" for the Center. After this first independent video work, she received compliments from the staff on her video and she decided to stay. Beverly did only one more "shoot" during her internship.

From the beginning of the experience, Beverly talked of doing a video project on her own. She planned a publicity tape for a band she knew. While the video festival was on, she wanted to do a tape about rape victims. However, at no time during the four months at CVC did Beverly do any video work on her own, except for the two "shoots" that were assigned to her.

The preceding section has described an overview of what happened without paying attention to either the causes or the consequences of any actions. The following sections will identify the principles and factors that created the internship experience.

Principles That Shape Internship Action

The rules of action that were found constantly to govern the action in the internship are called principles. The two principles of exchange and role will be described and analyzed in the following section.

Exchange

Of the principles and factors that create the curriculum in the internship setting, the most consistent, powerful and pervasive is the exchange. The exchange between the student who will work at the site without pay and the resource people at the site who will grant credit and provide other pay-offs is foundational to the entire experience. The nature of the work and the pay-offs is negotiated throughout the internship.

That this exchange is part of everyone's understanding of the arrangement is evident in both talk and actions. Don, the RC, said of the internship at CVC, "A little office work is okay in exchange for other more interesting involvements." One of the staff of CVC advised Don that the intern should be placed for as long as possible because, "There's a lot of input at the beginning and the returns come at the end. If the student isn't here for a long time, then it's not worth the effort." And while Beverly, the intern, was unsure of the terms of the exchange at the beginning of her experience, she understood them only too well by the end: Interviewer: "Some people talk about the kind of learning that goes on in a school like SEL as a trade-off. Do you see it that way?" Beverly: "Yeah, definitely. I learn how to use video and in return I did more than enough office work for them."

There are three aspects of the exchange which can be organized into continua. At CVC, the curriculum was determined by the site's struggle to keep ahead in the arrangement. These

three continua of the principle of exchange can be called maximum use/mimimum use, low risk/high risk, and independence/dependence (c.f. Lave, 1981).

Maximum Use/Mimimum Use. The resource tries to have the intern doing work to fill the resource's needs, to get the maximum use of the intern. In schools, students' capabilities are to be valued and encouraged for their own sake. However, at CVC, Beverly's abilities were valuable only in as much as they served a need of the organization. One evening after Beverly's day at CVC was over, she said to me, "I refuse to just do office work cause they're using me; it's free labor. If I sit and just do office work, it's fine with them, but I feel like it's [got to be] an even exchange."

Low Risk/High Risk. The tasks to which an intern is assigned are determined not only by what the resource needs, but also by what the intern is deemed able to do with minimal risk to the functioning of the resource. Low risk activities were especially prevalent during the first month of the internship.

The level of risk of any given task at CVC was determined by contact with the public or contact with video equipment. Three weeks into the internship, Beverly said to me, "They told me I could start using the equipment any time, but I guess I should wait until I'm finished all the classes." She had internalized the importance, the level of risk involved in her use of the equipment. Contact with the public was high risk because consequences of any action would be

visible to the community at large and not simply confined to the office. Especially at the beginning of the internship, Beverly's contact with the public was screened by another staff member who would, for example, answer the phone and then hand it to Beverly if she could handle it.

Independence/Dependence. The third continuum in the exchange is independence to dependence. Beverly was almost always given tasks to perform which she could do alone. It was desirable to have her working on jobs that required minimal supervision or assistance, because then all the staff were free to work on whatever was important to them. Of the 81 tasks Beverly was observed or reported doing, all but 14 were done independently.

Role

The principle of role refers to the part the intern plays within the social and organizational context of the resource. Role is not static like a job title, rather it is continually negotiated between the actors in the situation. The following section will identify the varying degrees and means by which action was determined by role in this internship.

Appendage/Individual. Many occurrances at the Center established Beverly as a possession or appendage of some staff member rather than a person in her own right. The messages were subtle, but pervasive and powerful.

Rather than consulting Beverly about her preferences for

her own actions, staff members passed her back and forth. As soon as Beverly had finished typing a letter for Rita, Gilda asked Rita, "Can I take her now?" to which Rita said, "Fine."

Bumping/Promoting. Beverly's position of lowest person on the totem pole was established by a routine bumping procedure. This bumping was observed in different situations: Beverly was present and available to do a task but the task was given to another staff person, or Beverly was present and available to do a task, but she was assigned to a lower level task instead. Instances from the video festival follow.

Gilda had been having trouble with the tapes. Beverly had offered a suggestion which Gilda ignored; so Beverly walked off, checked the coffee and talked to me. Shortly after Beverly made her suggestion, Allen, the director, came in. Gilda immediately called to him for help with the tape; Allen sent Beverly into the office to give a message to someone on the phone.

Gilda was organizing the audience to take their seats and get quiet for the start of the viewing. She sent Beverly to get head cleaner because the heads on the tape player were dirty. Gilda began to introduce the tapes. Beverly returned with the head cleaner; Gilda took it from her and sent her off to "see if there's anyone else who's here, cause we're starting." Then Gilda cleaned the heads herself while the audience waited.

In the first event, Beverly had told Gilda that she had a way of solving the problem with the tapes, thereby announcing

her competence in dealing with the task. In the second case, Gilda herself had taught Beverly how to clean the heads and had seen her do it. Therefore, in both instances, Gilda knew that Beverly was competent in a task related to the video equipment. However, rather than allow Beverly to display that competence, especially before her audience, Gilda assigned Beverly to lower level, non-video tasks. The hierarchy of roles prevailed over competence.

In addition to the forces that were present in the context of CVC, Beverly's character contributed to the creation of the hierarchy. She accepted the staff's definition of her role. When I asked how she decided whether or not to help a visitor with equipment, Beverly said, "If nobody else is going to ask, then I will. Like if I see that everyone else is occupied, I'll help the person."

Put-Down/Leg-Up. The following events can be understood as moves in a complex game not only to establish and maintain a low-level role for Beverly, but also to render her powerless to do anything about it. Though this description sounds insidious, most of the put-downs were uttered with a seeming innocence and one has to believe that the staff at CVC were good intentioned and unmalicious.

Teaching automatically established a superordinate/subordinate relationship and sometimes ignored Beverly's knowledge, thereby rendering her insignificant as a source of information or opinion. Twice a staff member instructed Beverly in some-

thing she already knew how to do. For example, toward the end of the internship, after Beverly had given out equipment many times, Chris was leaving the office and Beverly was signing out a portapac. Chris called, "Beverly, when they take the equipment out, be sure you write the number down." Then he left.

Beverly also was given subtle messages about the relative unimportance of the work she did. For example, Beverly asked Ginger where the book in which she had entered the petty cash record should go. Ginger replied, "Don't know. I don't have anything to do with that. There are somethings I don't want to know." Beverly's tasks were the ones the others did not want to know, or do.

The preceding analysis of the exchange and role principles and the location of the CVC internship on the continua that define those principles is not meant to be an indictment of internship experiences. In fact, despite the low level of Beverly's participation at CVC, there was much about her internship that was positive. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the forces that shape the experience so that they can be both tapped and structured for greater learning for the intern and greater rewards for the site.

Factors That Shape Internship Action

In addition to the principles that constantly governed the conditions of the internship, there were also more transi-

tory factors that influenced the experience from time to time. Factors internal to CVC include the following: atmosphere, customary practice, ongoing demands, and serendipity; the external factors include market, student, and school.

Atmosphere. The directors of CVC, Allen and Tai, live at the Center. Other staff members, when they are not taping on location, spend many evening and weekend hours either at the Center or involved with a Center-related or sponsored event. This situation required that CVC staff be so dedicated that they want to eat, sleep, and breathe video, and it created a feeling of family intimacy among the staff which built them into a very strong, self-contained group. Beverly was not expected to be as passionately involved as the rest of the staff. She was there to perform office duties for which one only had to be punctual, cooperative, and nice (Rita told Don she was "very happy with Beverly because she's on time, she does what she's told, and she's a pleasant and likable person"), not dedicated.

Besides just being an outsider to "the family," Beverly was different in another respect. Rita described the cultural difference between Beverly and the rest of the staff in the final interview, "The way she dresses, you know, she's like, punk. And, you can see none of us are really like that." In my final interview with Beverly, she noted the differences as well, "They were too different from me. Every one of them is in a different world . . . They were just the young, single,

woman-on-the-go, 1980's superwoman. I'm an achiever, but I'm not like that." Although Beverly was excluded from the nucleus of the CVC staff, she was affected by their values. She was prompt and perfectionistic about her work, qualities she did not exhibit as much in school or in her other job. While Beverly attributed her difficulty in communicating with the staff to their differences in culture, she also acknowledged that some of her most important learnings at CVC occurred because of the Center's radical politics. During the final interview, Beverly mentioned, "I just got more and more involved with community things definitely. I became aware of so many things, crucial issues that I didn't even know existed."

Customary Practice. In the case of Rita and the other staff at CVC, their images about what an internship should be constituted one of the structuring factors of Beverly's internship: customary practice. Beverly also compared her experience at CVC to what she inferred to be customary practice there or at a similar place. For example, Beverly identified her work with that typically done by a secretary. When asked how she felt after her first day at CVC, Beverly said, "I've never had a job like I'm doing here. I feel like a secretary which is weird for someone my age to be a secretary in an office."

While I never saw customary practice explicitely invoked as a reason for doing or not doing a certain task, I suspect that the knowledge of what a secretary/office worker usually

did, or should have done, was a subtle determinant of the kinds of jobs to which Beverly was assigned.

Ongoing Demands. There was no more important factor in the creation of the curriculum at CVC than the ongoing minute-to-minute and day-to-day demands of maintaining the organization. The greatest factor in determining what Beverly would do, what knowledge she would be taught, what event she would be included in, was what needed to be done. Beverly was placed at CVC as a student, but she was there to serve the needs of CVC. Consequently what she learned was always at least partially tied to what CVC needed her to learn to do.

The fact that the staff at CVC saw Beverly's purpose as serving their ongoing needs was reiterated in words and underscored in actions. Consider the following statement of Rita's: "Everyone here just considered her our assistant and whatever we needed, you know, people just asked her." The needs the staff expected Beverly to meet were not long range or complex, but were simply the moment-to-moment daily requirements of running an office. Rita saw her role and that of other staff as managers, supervisors who would be sure that Beverly would be kept busy: "Whoever's in the office knows what has to be done and will be giving the student the assignment for the day."

Another indication that Beverly was seen primarily as someone to meet CVC's needs was the absence of any orientation or explanation as to what people were doing and why. On her first day, Beverly was simply assimilated into the operation

by having her perform a series of simple tasks in the flow of the day's work. Tasks seemed to be assigned on the basis of skills she was assumed to possess and competence that she demonstrated through her performance. For example, when Beverly arrived on the morning of her first day, Rita immediately put her to work typing envelopes for a mailing; Rita had ascertained in her interview that Beverly had taken typing in school. Subsequent tasks included putting notices from the day's mail on the bulletin board, replacing tapes on the shelves of the video library, and covering a mistake on over 100 cards for the computerized mailing list. After lunch, Gilda asked that Beverly help her with her work for the video festival. The help involved going out for Gilda's lunch, watching some tapes while they ate, typing up a budget form, and making phone calls. The staff assumed that Beverly would be able to complete each task with little instruction in either skills or procedures. However, there was gradual progression in level of tasks from office to video-related, and from purely internal relations to involving some contact with people outside the Center. While ongoing demands determined the tasks which Beverly might be asked to perform, her competence in performing simple tasks also allowed her access to slightly more complex and more high risk tasks.

Serendipity. We have seen from the preceding section that much of what became available for Beverly to do happened by chance. By rights, all might be called serendipitous

events when they have positive outcomes. However, the term serendipity as it is used here refers to specific occurrances that do not necessarily require the student's engagement, but that she might pick up and learn from. Moore (1981) has referred to this phenomenon as "being there."

It is much easier to identify serendipitous occurrances than it is to specify what the student might learn from them. We only can cite several examples and speculate that, in some instances, the student probably learned something.

Video projects abounded. In one afternoon, Loretta and Juan were editing their tape; Tai and Ginger were working with the computer editing machine on an old CVC tape; three woman who were using the Center were viewing their rough tape and making comments about the camera work. In each of these cases, not only was a process occurring from which Beverly could have learned video skills by observing, but each tape was about something. On that day, Beverly could have learned about Cuba after the revolution, gang warfare, or a young woman's struggle to keep her family together despite extreme poverty.

Lessons were there to be learned. Allen had a phone conversation in which he related the following story: "I just joined AFTRA and I can't believe I waited so long. The dues are low and someone just called me the other day with a job where they said they'd pay X and I said, 'Sorry, I belong to AFTRA and I can't take the job unless you pay Y' and they said, 'Well, sure!'" Beverly could have learned about the benefits

of belonging to a union if she had been listening to this conversation. Many other instances of the same kind could be cited when potentially useful information was available to Beverly.

Market. Market factors are conditions affecting the internship curriculum over which no one inside the internship experience has any control. At CVC, they came in two forms: phone calls and visitors.

Phone calls included anything from a wrong number to a request for a "shoot." Beverly stressed the importance of the phone call in our final interview: "If you're the person who takes the call, if you answer the phone, then you get first pick at anything." To some degree, access to externally presented tasks came through first knowledge of them. Access to phone calls not only provided some claim to outside assignments, it also allowed the intern to seek information that she would not otherwise require. Beverly found out a great deal about the operations at CVC by having to answer the questions of callers.

One of the qualities of market factors that distinguishes them from internal factors is that they always take precedence. Market demands are met before internal demands. This rule also holds with respect to student factors.

Student. Some of the curriculum at CVC was determined by external factors lodged in the student. The degree of influence that any student has on her own experience can vary widely.

Beverly was sometimes absent and she had serious demands in her own life that often took precedence over her work at CVC, but she was usually quite passive, content to let the flow of the experience wash over her in whatever way it happened.

Beverly tended to acquiesce to the situation. It is interesting that Rita complimented Beverly on her "initiative," a quality attributed to her because of her willingness to get started on her own with tasks she knew she had to do. On the other hand, Don criticised Beverly for her lack of "initiative." He felt, "She needs to learn to push herself a little more." When I asked Beverly how she could have made CVC better, she said, "I could have/if I could have dealt with situations they put me in better, and stood up for my rights, they would have felt more pressure to give me more interesting jobs." Even in her description of how she should have acted, Beverly still conceived of the power as being in the hands of the CVC staff: "dealt with situations they put me in better" and "pressure to give me more interesting jobs." Beverly's lack of assertiveness affected what she did and what knowledge and skills she acquired.

School. The school factors that shaped the curriculum at CVC were not as powerful as the other internal or external factors, but they are important to examine as instances of explicit curriculum making.

The school attempts to maintain some control over the internship experience through several mechanisms: attendance

checks, the formal curriculum (the LEAP), site visits, seminars, and evaluation forms. However, the unique aspect to the school as an external factor in the creation of the curriculum at the site is that it, unlike market or student factors, does not take precedence over internal factors. Often the effects of the school's efforts at control are difficult to identify or assess, but some instances follow.

The LEAP. The Learning Experience Activity Package is the formal, written curriculum for the internship at CVC; it states goals for the student and specifies activities to be completed by the student. It was drawn up by Don, the Resource Coordinator, after his initial visit with Rita. While the LEAP was frequently invoked in the initial interviews with Don and Beverly (it was foundational to their plans), it rarely was used as a reason for doing or not doing something at CVC. Daily plans and activities were directed by principles and factors described above and not by a formal statement such as the LEAP.

Seminar. The formal seminar at SEL involves a small group of students once a week in a meeting with their advisor; they discuss school business and internship activities or problems. From the beginning of the internship, these encounters overpowered any other attempts at control of the internship experience in terms of their observable effects.

Beverly often spoke of what she ought to do at CVC on the basis of her conversations with her advisor, Maggie, or

with Don. She quoted admonitions of Maggie's, "I talked with Maggie in seminar about getting more involved with the equipment and she told me that I have to speak up about starting my own project. I know it's up to me." While Beverly's complaints to Maggie usually resulted in advice that was meant to empower Beverly with some sense of how to control the situation to her own advantage, talks with Don usually resulted in his taking some action on Beverly's behalf: "Every time I went and complained to Don about it, Don did something and told them." Although talks with Maggie and Don appeared more in Beverly's talk than any other school influence, they had only a slight effect on what actually occurred during Beverly's internship.

Conclusion

In summary, the case study of an internship in a Community Video Center revealed strong forces that determined the curriculum of the student's experience. I defined curriculum as the plans for, actions, and outcomes of experience. This paper focused on the principles and factors that determined the action. The exchange and role principles defined the intern's degree and kind of participation at the site along a variety of continua. While the particular student in the case study generally experienced the lower ends of the continua, the possibility for higher level participation exists. Factors were identified which may explain some of the causes of the

intern's part in the exchange and her role. Of particular interest to school supervisors of internships may be the very strong influence of the ongoing demands of the workplace especially relative to any formal curriculum designed by the school.

Perhaps it is irreverent to attempt to locate the curriculum of an experience, to try to fit the dynamic, evanescent moments of learning into static, permanent categories. However, for those of us who see both the power and the further potential of internship experiences and desire both to defend and improve them, it is crucial that we have a common language and conceptual framework.

The principles and factors which have been briefly described in this paper were derived from a close examination of one internship site. However, observation and experience suggest that they are not unique. I hope the knowledge presented here about the natural influences on curriculum in an internship setting will aid educators in their efforts to shape the curricula of future internships.

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